

BRIEFING BY REAR ADMIRAL MARK I. FOX AND DR. TAHSEEN SHEIKHLY, OPERATION FARDH AL-QANOON CIVILIAN SPOKESMAN, TOPIC: TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON OPERATION FARDH AL-QANOON AS WELL AS A MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE IRAQ OPERATIONAL UPDATE, LOCATION: THE COMBINED PRESS INFORMATION CENTER, BAGHDAD, IRAQ TIME: 2:00 P.M. EDT DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2007

ADM. FOX: Good afternoon and as-salaam aleikum. Today I'm joined by government of Iraq's Operation Fardh al-Qanoon civilian spokesman, Dr. Tahseen Sheikhly. Thank you for being here today. Thank you for joining me.

DR. SHEIKHLY: Thank you. Shukran jazilan.

ADM. FOX: We are now into the twelfth week of the surge of operations and have made substantial progress. But we do know there is still much more to do. It's a tough fight and it's a long fight. Next week Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus will travel to Washington, DC to give testimony before the US Congress. They will provide a comprehensive forthright firsthand assessment of the conditions in Iraq and will offer recommendations for the way ahead. A welcomed development is the recent declaration by Muqtada al-Sadar calling for all members of Jaish al-Mahdi to end their violence and it's encouraging to see that. The Multi-National force Iraq joins the government of Iraq in welcoming Sadar's publicly articulated commitment to peace. If implemented, Sadar's order holds the prospect of allowing Iraqi security and Coalition forces to intensify their focus on al-Qaeda of Iraq and protecting the Iraqi population as well as on helping Iraq rebuild its damaged infrastructure and improve basic services, all without distraction from the Mahdi army. An end of this violence would also be an important step in helping Iraqi authorities focus greater attention on achieving the political and economic solutions necessary for progress and less on dealing with criminal activity, sectarian violence, kidnappings, assassinations, and attacks on Iraqi and Coalition forces. We call in all parties and all elements to support and enforce this new initiative.

To build on the additional security that Sadar's order could bring, the Coalition will continue to support Iraqi security forces in their enforcement of the law against those individuals who commit acts of violence. Muqtada al-Sadar's declaration holds the potential to reduce criminal activity and help reunite Iraqis separated by ethnosectarian violence and fear. And we look forward to confirming the reduction of that violence that will result if those involved fulfill their commitment to following Sadar's directions.

On August 30th, the Taji wing of the Iraqi air force flew its first totally autonomous mission without the assistance of any American partners. Iraqi pilots flew in a mission to survey and monitor power lines in Iraq, marking a meaningful milestone in the history of the Iraqi air force. Last year they flew a total of three hundred hours mostly in the Bell Jet-Ranger helicopter. In August alone, last month, they flew two hundred hours in the Huey-II and to date the Iraq air force has flown more than seven hundred hours in their Hueys and they've only been flying them since the beginning of March.

On August 25th, seven Iraqi citizens escaped from an al-Qaeda in Iraq prison northwest of Baghdad near Taji and notified Coalition forces they had witnessed torture and murder. During a separate and independent operation that same day, attack helicopters patrolling the area positively identified and killed three al-Qaeda terrorists. The Iraqi citizens who had escaped the prison later identified the remains of the three

dead terrorists as their captors. After identifying the terrorists, the Iraqis led Coalition forces to the house where they had been held captive. Soldiers discovered eight bodies believed to be a mix of both Sunni and Shia men in the makeshift prison. Each had gunshot wounds to the head and showed obvious signs of torture. The nature of the enemy should be clear to all. Al-Qaeda tries to terrorize local population with torture and murder but this barbaric tactic is not working. Instead of being intimidated, Iraqis are bravely resisting and are now partnering with Coalition and Iraq security forces to defeat this brutal enemy.

On August 27th, just west of Baghdad, Coalition forces captured an al-Qaeda foreign terrorist facilitator who recently provided three suicide bombers for an impending attack. Six al-Qaeda terrorists were killed in this operation when they attacked Coalition forces. Further examination of the site, located about six miles west of Baghdad International Airport, revealed the facility was used to make IED triggering devices. Eliminating this foreign terrorist facilitator and the IED making cell will undoubtedly benefit the local citizens of that area. Thirty-seven IED attacks have occurred within seven miles of this site since the first of August.

On August 28th, acting on a tip from concerned citizen, Coalition forces discovered a large cache 411 five gallon plastic jugs of nitric acid buried near the town of Niam Mashan(sp), 10 miles west of Baghdad International Airport. The citizen who reported the cache helped the soldiers dig up the jugs, which is another good example of the Iraqi people taking the lead against the terrorist elements and taking back their neighborhoods.

While we target al-Qaeda networks and their leadership, we also continue to chip away at the extremist militia and criminal groups, known as special groups, that are trained, armed, funded and equipped by Iran's Quds force.

In early July, Coalition forces captured Sheik Jassim Hasnawi in the west Rashid district of Baghdad. Al-Hasnawi was a significant leader in the special groups organization and oversaw as many as a thousand extremists in orchestrated deadly explosively formed penetrator attacks. Hasnawi was responsible for killing hundreds of Sunni Muslims attempting to further foment sectarian violence. A feared leader of terrorists with the support of the Quds force, Hasnawi is no longer a threat to innocent Iraqi citizens.

We own the initiative and are on the offensive and are conducting precision operations targeting all extremists networks and all that threaten the security and the path to peace and progress in Iraq. It's a tough fight but we are committed to helping the Iraqi people and the government of Iraq achieve a safe, stable, and secure nation. So at this time I would like to turn the microphone over to Dr. Tahseen. Welcome.

DR. TAHSEEN: Shukran jazilan. [no translation provided] . . . at the level of the military level, and this is what we expected from this plan, and this is to remove the civil war from Baghdad. Also to enhance the trust and confidence between the government and the Iraqi people so that there won't be any kind of arming outside the government. And these two things have been accomplished in a good way in the past six months. But still of course there are some good positive events that have been accomplished on the services level whether in Rusafa district or Karkh district. Yesterday there was an announcement of establishing 25 power stations in Baghdad. Also we prepared a plan to face this winter and this also was prepared by the oil ministry and the provisional council

in Baghdad to provide the fuel for the people in a good way, and in a sufficient way, and to make sure that it will be distributed in a good way to people in Baghdad.

Also the progress has been achieved in reconstruction and development. In reconstructions like we have the Hamed al-Kazin bridge and we will celebrate finishing the reconstruction of this bridge and also we have also finished the Muthanna B Street and also the Saydiya bridge which is about to end.

All these projects, actually they're simple projects but they indicate that there's a good tangible progress in providing services as long as there are some supporting committees that could handle the services provided during the crisis that we are going through. And the citizen will make sure so that we will make sure that we will give the citizen what he actually expects and what he needs during the current circumstances that he's facing everyday.

And so it's a great pleasure for me today to talk about the progress in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and particularly in the services it provides. The Baghdad municipality provided and worked on several projects in renovating Baghdad in content and form like paving roads and making amusement parks for the children, also contributing with the provisional council in Baghdad and rehabilitating several schools. And also we reopened some clinics in several places in Baghdad and several doctors volunteered to prevent health services for the people particularly in areas that they used to be called hot zones but now they're actually called safe zones. And there is a good cooperation between the health, minister of health and the provisional council to establish two hospitals that will provide services; one in Karkh district and the other in Rusafa district. And also we worked on constructing residential houses for the people who have been displaced and these families have been compensated by the provisional council in Karkh district also. All these projects are just part of the services that accompanied Operation Fardh al-Qanoon alongside the military operation. The reduction of violence in Baghdad is an indication that the operation accomplished a good thing but the most important thing of the operation is that the cooperation of the citizen with the military forces whether police, army, or the Multi-National forces in fighting terrorism to end all violence and to unite the country at the same time. Also the sense of responsibility, encouraging the sense of responsibility among people so that we can establish a good security and a peaceful country.

Thank you so much. We would like now to, we're glad to take your questions and Admiral Fox and me are ready to answer your questions. Would you please raise a question.

Q You've indicated that there is a good progress and a tangible progress in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and this is a good thing. But you've talked about providing fuel for the people in winter and recently they were promised - in the past there were promises but how would you do that now? Will there be some tangible thing or will there only be just promises just like before? And the second question is to Admiral Fox. Concerning two questions, first the rectifying what the interpreter said is now exactly with the American forces and yesterday a retired British general said he criticized the American policy in Iraq. How would you comment about this?

DR. TAHSEEN: Let me first answer the first question concerning the services. The project for winter had been discussed last Friday. There is a cooperation between the ministry of oil, and the provisional council, and also the commanding operation of Fardh

al-Qanoon and it includes two parts. One is providing these fuels in Baghdad and we need fuel and gas in Baghdad so that we can face the difficulties presented in winter and we're going to provide this fuel. And the second thing is the mechanism of distributing these things to the people so that we can guarantee every family could get one hundred liter of oil for every family and we will work on guaranteeing that. And we know that there will be a corruption during the distribution but there will be some good procedures that will guarantee a good distribution program. And hopefully these services will be provided in a good way.

ADM. FOX: In answer to your question regarding the British general, I read those reports as well. I think the way I would handle that is first of all there can be disagreements amongst professionals about certain ways of how you handle strategy and tactics and so forth. But I also would review a bit of a recent past of how we've gotten to where we are. You know, at this time a year ago we were focused predominantly on trying to get an accelerated rate of transition to the Iraqi security forces with a view of we wanted to be able to get the Iraqi security forces up and running as soon as possible. And we saw the levels of violence as 2006 continued after the Samarra mosque bombing in early 2006 and the violence just continued to go up. And it became obvious towards the end of last year that a new look at our strategy was warranted. And so in concert with General Petraeus' arrival and also the surge actually had been identified prior to that and so the surge of forces that began arriving in February and culminated with their final arrival of the fifth additional brigade in June gave us the opportunity now to implement the new strategy that General Petraeus, who has been very much involved in the writing of our counterinsurgency doctrine and how we handle these kinds of difficult nontraditional types of war and these kinds of conflicts. And so, the bulk of the surge-the surge didn't even completely all arrive until the middle of June and this now the very beginning of September, so we've only seen about two, two-and-a-half months of the full surge operation in force. And what we've seen has been very encouraging quite frankly. There's still a lot of work to do though. We have tactical momentum and we have gotten an enormous amount of traction in terms of coming to grips with a lot of the security issues and being able to keep in particular al-Qaeda off balance. When you think about, again I go back to the latter part of last year and look at al-Anbar and the level of violence that had been out there and then you see the precipitous decline that's occurred just in the last year, inside of the last year, those are indications now that this - a facet of this new strategy is extremely effective. So, I respect the input from other professionals and from people who have been, having served here before or from the outside, but in the same breath our focus here is to implement the strategy that has been laid out and to conduct the mission that we've been given.

Q Question from Hora TV. Question to Admiral Fox. What are the details of the detention operation of eight people involved in they belong to the Iranian [inaudible] and will you stop the raids in Sadr City?

ADM. FOX: Let me just make sure I clarify. This is the incident that occurred earlier this week that you're talking about? The Iranians that were detained?

Yes.

ADM. FOX: Is that correct? Okay I just want to make sure. What happened was it was a routine- as you well know, there are checkpoints all over the city and when vehicles come to the checkpoints, they're stopped and searched. And there were illegal

weapons that didn't have the appropriate justification and paperwork in those vehicles. The individuals in those vehicles were allowed to go on and continue on into the Sheraton and then as the checkpoint personnel reported what they had found to their higher headquarters, they were ordered to conduct a routine investigation to get additional information. And so as part of a routine operation, they went, they got the people that were involved. They detained them. And then they conducted the rest of the investigation, and then when they realized that and concluded the investigation, as part of a standard force protection measure, they realized that there was no reason to detain them and they were released.

I'm sorry the second part was?

Q The second question sir was when are we as MNF-I gonna stop our raids, conducting our raids in Sadr City?

ADM. FOX: When there are no longer criminal elements that are actively involved in targeting Coalition or trying to undermine the government of Iraq operating there.

Q I have a question for both of you regarding services. In many communities, as you know, services like gasoline, real estate are controlled by militias. They're the ones who are distributing some of these things to the people. So what is the Iraqi government and the Americans doing not just to conduct raids against those who are attacking Coalition forces but to try and breakdown what some [inaudible] have called the "shadow government" that competes with your own?

DR. TAHSEEN: Actually we're trying as much as we can to provide the essential services but we can't forget that the situation in Iraq and the reality. Now we're constructing the Iraqi government and this demands a lot. And one of these things to enhance the Iraqi forces whether police and army and so when providing services to the city eliminating the terrorist and the same time securing the services provided. So it's sure that Operation Fardh al-Qanoon targets any kind of arming. And the orders by the prime minister are actually clear. Any kind of arming in the streets it means that there is an action against the Iraqi government and the Iraqi citizens. And this is an essential thing that we should take into consideration.

ADM. FOX: In response to your question on the Multi-National force side, there are a number of tactics and techniques that we're using some of which include spot checks on the gas stations and also conducting operations in such a way so that we know-that's the advantage in fact of having our the joint security stations and having our troops living and operating in the midst of the local population. Part of our strategy is to protect the local population and in that effort, it's important also to provide the basic services that are required to include banking, to include open markets, and the things that are necessary for a society to continue. And we are well aware of the fact that there are influences and there are criminal activities that are ongoing in Baghdad that have to be addressed. And the key, in our view, is to first of all stabilize the area, get to the point where the people trust both the Coalition and the Iraqi security forces and then once we've created that kind of trust which we're in the midst of doing, then the people actually turn out to be your greatest ally in this. And that's why our focus has been throughout to protect the people of Iraq. Once we've made clear that we're doing that, then the people will now realize that their best interests are served by not being subjugated or being allied with some of these criminal elements or with the extremists elements. So there's a number of different ways that we're working that. That's a good question.

Q Admiral Fox al-Qaeda with any kind of religious side, we see that there is attacks and with Ramadan coming, so do you have any intelligence, reports that al-Qaeda is going to launch operations during this month in Baghdad or in provinces? Are you ready to stop these attacks in Ramadan in case they occur?

ADM. FOX: That's a very good question. In fact, if you look at the historical trends of violence over the past few years, you see a rise in violence leading up to Ramadan, and we are certainly far from making any final assessments but the levels of violence as we see we're a couple of weeks away right now from Ramadan, and we've not seen that level of elevated violence per se. Now one of the reasons is because we ourselves have been focused on creating security conditions that will prevent these spectacular attacks and to be able to also protect the people of Iraq and to essentially anticipate that. The nature of this enemy is such that they will do anything they could to kill as many people in as many different ways as they could, in as many different places. And so our operations have been focused on keeping al-Qaeda off balance and you see us repeatedly talk about we've taken down cells and we've taken down emirs and different leaders within the network and the structures. And so that has been, I think, the difference here in that we are pressuring on a day-to-day basis. Every single day we have operations that are targeting al-Qaeda in Anbar, up north in Baqoubah. All, you know, Arab Jubar, the belts around Baghdad, within Baghdad proper. And so the difference in these operations that we've talked about has been the fact that there has been sustained persistent pressure applied to al-Qaeda. And so when we have a takedown and when we have an opportunity to get information about it, we'll turn right around and take the immediate information that we've got from a given site and go on and do another one. So, that's part of our strategy here is to be able to counter what we expect al-Qaeda will try to do. And as you well know, you want to protect everywhere. You want to create conditions where people will be safe all over the country. And we failed quite frankly in a couple of areas. Up in, you know, the Yezidis up north and the Turkoman over in Amurli those are spectacular horrific attacks against totally innocent people that did not have the appropriate security measures in place. That said, our center of gravity and our focus has been Baghdad, the Baghdad belts, and the places where we know that al-Qaeda has been operating and we feel that we've been effective in getting the tactical momentum and pressuring and keeping the pressure on day after day against the al-Qaeda terrorists. That's a good question.

Q The first question. Concerning the surge and the raid on the Sabah Newspaper, so could you give us details about this operation so why did it happen? Were there weapons inside al-Sabah newspaper or were there some wanted person there for Multi-National forces? And second question, after Muqtada al-Sadar froze the Mahdi army activities, is there a new strategy for the Coalition forces?

ADM. FOX: I'll take this one. At that newspaper area, there was- we had actionable intelligence regarding activity that had been going on there and so we conducted operations there and found illegal weapons in the facility. And we detained six people in that. So, we had specific actionable intelligence that led us to conduct the operations that we conducted.

In answer to your second question about our strategy change based on Sadar and his statement and I think that our strategy has remained the same in terms of protecting the people of Iraq. And so to the extent that, as I mentioned in my opening statements, to the

extent that any criminal elements or any secret cells should chose to align themselves and obey the declaration made by Sadar, I think that would be a welcome addition to the local security that would help protect the people of Iraq. The people of Iraq deserve to be able to have pilgrimages free of violence. And the people of Iraq deserve to be able to worship free of violence. And so, I think it's an important thing that he- you know, it's an important statement that he's made if people will comply with it. We'll see.

Q Question from Samarra TV. Concerning the events recently in Karbala we need a comment by the Admiral Fox on the recent incidents in Karbala and the recent investigations that are being carried out there.

ADM. FOX: Actually the Coalition force participation is limited right now to assisting the government of Iraq in their investigation. This is a government of Iraq area of investigation and what we're doing is we're helping with forensics, and with technical analysis, and with the investigation of uh- I presume you're talking about the assassinations in Karbala or the violence that occurred down there - and so we're helping in an investigating type of way. But we don't own or direct that type of investigation. And I'd have to refer to the government of Iraq spokesman that's not focused on Baghdad security.

DR. TAHSEEN: I wish that was part of operation in Baghdad but this belongs to the ministry of interior and defense and they could most probably answer your question.

Q Question to Dr. Tahseen. To what extent the commanding operation in Baghdad do you think are the civilian part of that commanding do you think that they're, they have to do with General Petraeus' report and could your civilian strategy could it be changed upon the report that will be presented by General Petraeus?

DR. TAHSEEN: Actually the Multi-National forces are they're partners for the Iraqi government and the Iraqi forces in reconstruction and development and also in providing services. There are so many projects that we both work on. And I don't think the report deals with the Multi-National forces or only the Americans but it's about helping the Iraqi people. They have the full desire to cooperate with us and we welcome that. And we welcome this desire and there is a good cooperation in many projects that actually started in Baghdad and in all around Iraq.

Q This one is for Admiral Fox. We all have been talking about this sectarian conflict that Shia, Sunnis are in conflict, al-Qaeda attacks, militia operations. Of late in the recent few months, weeks are you noticing increased Shia-Shia infighting militia fightings especially southern [inaudible] because we get all these unconfirmed reports sometimes that [inaudible] sources but what is the US military intelligence saying? Are you getting these increased, especially between these two groups, the Hawkins [inaudible] group and the Mahdi militia each apparently they both are attacking each others officers, neighborhoods, leaders and to some extent even the Karbala element could be one of the casualty of that kind of intra Shia violence and infighting.

ADM. FOX: Well there is no question that there is Shia on Shia violence. That's indisputable. I mean, you can go back to January. The cult, the heavenly cult group down there that were moving towards Najaf to conduct you know some sort of an apocalyptic goal. And so there is no question about the fact that there is Shia on Shia violence. And in fact, we the Coalition have been in a supporting role to the legitimate Iraqi security forces that are operating in those areas. So, uh down in Nasariyah, I guess it was a couple of months ago, where there was an uprising or there was some conflict

and the Iraqi security forces working through their transition teams and went through the process where they actually- we were able to support the legitimate Iraqi security forces against some insurgents or some extremists elements down there and we worked very well together. So, our focus has been, quite frankly, on supporting and insuring that the legitimate Iraqi security forces are the ones that keep the law and order and supporting the hierarchy of the government of Iraq at large. But I agree with you, there is no question that there is a degree of Shia on Shia violence especially down south.

Q Given this context somewhere it just appears that in the last may be six months the whole Iraq story has been dominated so much by the security crackdowns whether it is Baghdad or across Iraq, the surge operations, everything. This again gives rise to coming back to one of the key issues last year which was dismantling of the militias. And that has been one of the key demands from US military authorities in Washington but nothing seems to be now really done anything about it. It just lost complete media as well as US military attention it seems like that.

ADM. FOX: Well you know, as I said, our focus is on the legitimate Iraqi security force and working with the Iraqi government. So, to the extent that people are aligned with and working with the legitimate government and the Iraqi security force then that's the focus that we have taken in terms of how we handle these kinds of situations. The legitimacy and the authority of the Iraqi government we feel is extremely important and so rather than allow ourselves to get into the characterization of one faction against another and militia on militia our focus has been to support, and train, and assist the legitimate security forces and the government of Iraq.

Q Will you try to use the timing to tighten the screws a bit on Mahdi militia and try to really force some kind of dismantling now that there is some kind of a voluntary suspension happening? Is it the right time to really pressure as the Maliki government to really go for this dismantling?

ADM. FOX: Well as I mentioned earlier, our focus really is on supporting and supplementing the legitimate government of Iraq. And we think that's the right way to go. So I understand the next nature and the context of your question but the way I would characterize it is a legitimate Iraqi security force. We're with them and we're supporting them. And then whoever they're dealing with in whatever context if they're against the Iraqi security force then we're gonna obviously handle it in a way of where we're supporting the Iraqi security forces.

Q Just to follow up on that, you were talking legitimate security forces, I mean just yesterday you closed down a police station in western Baghdad. So I mean is this something we're gonna see more of where you've started to come to realize that perhaps some of those legitimate forces are actually illegally?

ADM. FOX: Well you know, we all know that there are sectarian pressures within the Iraqi security force and that's one of the issues that both the ministry, primarily the minister of interior has been working. And I'd just like to point out, you know, the commanding general of the national police in the past four months has changed nine out of nine brigade commanders, 17 out of 24 battalion commanders all with the prime minister's support and encouragement. And one of the things that the national police in this case, the commanding general of the national police, has actually created a construct where if the commander is Sunni, then he'll have the deputy that's a Shia or some other

construct. So the Iraqi government is working through this process in terms of the loyalty and the sectarian pressures in their security forces.

Q Concerning the Gazaliah watch guards, so what about this uh watch guard that you formed and have you disbanded this watch guard or have they joined the police forces?

ADM. FOX: The way that we handle these local neighborhood guardians concerned citizens- to back up just a little bit. What we've seen is after al-Qaeda in particular had overplayed their hand and were espousing this Tali-ban like environment where people couldn't smoke and very strict and repressive forms of governance. The people have had enough of that and with al-Qaeda having overplayed it's hand and so the big change has been the up swell of local security forces and local people saying we've had enough of this. Our stance has always been anyone who want to ally themselves and to become part of a legitimate part of the Iraqi government, we will find a way and a means to help them do that. The way we do that is through a very careful vetting process and we make sure that every person that comes into these units as they're formed are vetted. They have their biometrics. They have their retinas scanned and their finger prints and they go through a process where not all of them are allowed to come in. But for example we've got 1,700 new recruits over in Abu Ghraib, for example, who have now signed up and they're going through training. And by so doing, then they become a part of, after they've gone through the vetting and the training, then they are part of the legitimate security force of that local area or of the Iraqi security force. And so, we do not and are not interested in having new forms of armed militias or anything like that. That's not the point and that's not any of what's going on. It's a means by which we can systematically bring local citizens who are interested in aligning themselves and working with and becoming part of the Iraqi security force to do just that. And we're seeing remarkable change and remarkable results from this up swell at the local area which is quite frankly a very encouraging thing to see the number of people who in the local construct are now turning and saying I want to be part of the Iraqi security force. I want to support the legitimate Iraqi government. That's a very powerful thing.

Q But how would you convince the Iraqi people with their fears concerning arming the Gazaliah troops or the- how would you tell the people that those won't be militias or new militias particularly that some had actually participated? Some of those locals participated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic army before.

ADM. FOX: That's a legitimate source of concern. And that's why this vetting process needs to be thorough and also the people who are in charge of these units are loyal and also that the loyalty,- if they prove themselves to be disloyal, then they're not part of that unit and they'll be discarded. But you know I think it's an important thing to understand that in a place- you reconcile between enemies not between friends. And steps somewhere along the way. I was recently in Anbar at a gathering where I was with a marine and with a group of tribal leaders. And we were having a conversation where the marine mentioned to me in passing. He said "this time two years ago all of these people were on a list and they were not friends of mine. And now we're all in a room together and we're talking and we're working on a way ahead to create a stable and secure Iraq" and that's the kind of reconciliation. That's the kind of step that need to be taken at the local level and quite frankly where it begins at the local level, and then it can work its way up that's how ultimately you see national reconciliation as well. It's going to be one

step at a time. And it's a source of concern though. You're obviously, you've hit on an area where we're focused and we're concerned about it but we also see that It's a necessary step to be able to create the environment for local reconciliation and for security so that all of the other pieces that we have talked about in terms of basic services and for normal life to now begin to resume.

DR. TAHSEEN: Add just one thing. It's not actually a process of arming or forming a militia but on the contrary, it's actually enhancing the confidence, self-confidence in the Iraqi citizen and also self responsibility. And in many places, there is still hesitation in some people to join the Iraqi forces. And this is maybe because of what has been issued about these- that there is a fear between the civilians and the forces. So why don't you just give chance to those people who could actually be good and support those troops. So this kind of feeling or this kind of building a good sense of responsibility and confidence between the citizen and the security forces could bring us to a good step.

Q Question to Admiral Fox. If you go back to the raid against al-Sabah newspaper, there are some security sources from the newspaper said that there is an interpreter who works with the American forces, came inside the building to make an interview with the editor, and when she was on her way out, she was kidnapped or killed. So could you clarify this? Is that true?

ADM. FOX: I'm familiar with that report. The actual operations that were conducted in and around that office were not specifically related to the translator. There was a distance in time between those two events. And the actual operation was conducted based on some very specific actionable intelligence that was not related to the interpreter.

We have time for one more question.

DR. TAHSEEN: We hoped we would take more questions but our time is stringent. Thank you.

Q After investigations proved that [inaudible] Saddam Hussein is supporting terrorism in Iraq, so what about detaining [inaudible] Saddam Hussein by the interpool(sp)?

DR. TAHSEEN: I hope Admiral Fox could allow me to answer this question. [translation not given]. . . . But there is no indication that those people had been delivered. Thank you so much to Admiral Fox for this press conference.

ADM. FOX: I'm always honored to have the opportunity to spend time with my good friend. I really do appreciate his taking time out of his day to join me today and facing all of these questions. And I look forward to the next time we have a chance to do this together. Thank you very much.

DR. TAHSEEN: Thank you very much. Thank you. Shukran jazilan.

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